

BAAMA President's Message
September 2000

A View From Above

I've just returned from the URISA International conference, where I observed what other chapters are doing for their members, as well as contributed to the URISA Board's ruminations on how the international association should respond to the changing needs of its members.

BAAMA is one of the best of URISA's 26 chapters. The variety and quality of our educational and professional activities compares with those of the top five chapters across the country and in Canada. Indeed, BAAMA was recognized with an Honorable Mention in the annual Chapter of the Year award ceremony. (We won two years ago, and it would be unseemly for us to win every year!)

As an international organization, URISA recognizes that local chapters are becoming more and more competent to independently produce quality GIS-related educational programs within their regional communities. So, URISA is changing its focus to that of introducing emerging technologies and exemplary implementations to its members, along with producing a growing library of technical publications and workshops for beginning- and intermediate-level learning. URISA is also embarking on a new role: that of being an advocacy voice for our GIS profession in public policy issues.

85 percent of you who read the last paragraph probably shrugged, "so what." Most of the members of URISA's chapters are not members of the international association, and vice versa. That is likely to change, however, as we understand the need for our local and national organizations to join forces on such issues as the certification of GIS Professionals, the sale of public-agency geographic information, the development of standards for framework data layers, and the legal responsibilities for GIS basemap creation and maintenance.

It is our strength, but also our limitation, that BAAMA is a volunteer-driven professional association. We have fun producing the GIS activities that many of you enjoy, such as the Geography Poster Contest, the annual CalGIS conference, bi-monthly educational meetings, an active webpage and a newsletter. But, we can't do everything we'd like to do because of the demands of our day jobs! We'd like to have a greater impact in educating young people about GIS. We'd like to contribute GIS expertise to social and environmental issues in our region. We'd like to have a voice in the public policy decisions in Sacramento, Washington DC, and internationally. We'd like to be more of a clearinghouse for GIS-related information about educational classes, employment, service providers, data sources, and application techniques.

We'd like to get help from another dozen or more volunteers to expand our activities and commence new ones. Volunteers who are ready to give something back to the community that has helped their professional development.

Are we reaching you? Here are some things you can do:

- Let a BAAMA Board member know what you like, what you don't like, and what you want in our meetings, seminars, and conferences.
- Convince a colleague to join BAAMA
- Solicit an agency or company, now, to be a sponsor of the CalGIS 2001 conference in

Sacramento, February 21-23

- Attend BAAMA Board meetings to volunteer an activity (first Tuesday of every month)

As our friend, Jonathan Lowe put it, help put the BAAMA in BAAMA-Lama-Ding-Dong!

With a wink, and a smile, and steadfast commitment, I remain

Your BAAMA President and Left Wing Commander

Bruce Joffe